



Curriculum

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The Phoenix Way

“The Phoenix Way” is the collective coaching methodology that our club employs for the purpose of developing each player to their full potential. The objectives of The Phoenix Way are listed below.

- Provide a quality learning environment
- Help each player reach their goals
- Build character and teach life lessons.

The Phoenix Way shapes the very essence of our travel program. It incorporates not just soccer training. It also incorporates teaching the values of integrity, sportsmanship, and work ethic. Our focus extends beyond giving kids the opportunity to succeed in soccer. We want kids to succeed in the world around them.

The Phoenix Curriculum is one component of the Phoenix Way. Our club provides each player with a quality learning environment through a detailed progressive curriculum. The Phoenix Curriculum is based on key developmental needs that have been identified for each age group. Learning objectives and teaching priorities are setup for the purpose of developing each player to their full potential.



Winning in Perspective

The definition of success in our program is the improvement of players over time. Other clubs define success by the number of championships won, their league participation, their league division, or prestige of their club. Defining success in those terms is fundamentally wrong because it doesn't address development.

The definition of success in our program starts with a simple premise. Winning is important but development is far more important. When development is a primary focus, players are allowed to make mistakes and take risks in order to improve. There is an understanding that less mistakes will occur over time. The result is that individual players improve more than in a win-first environment where risk taking and mistakes are discouraged.

Winning and development are competing interests. We prioritize a development approach because it makes players better in the long run. It better prepares players to reach their goals whether it's earning more playing time, advancing to our A teams, playing in high school, playing in college, etc.

We expect our players to play well. It's quite common in youth soccer to win and not play well. That is not acceptable in our program. When it comes to game day, our club operates under the following paradigm.

- Play the game the right way
- Reward individual merit
- Exhibit good sportsmanship, learn life lessons, build character
- Play to win but never at the expense of the first 3 items



Leagues in Perspective

There is too much emphasis in youth soccer on the need to play in certain travel leagues or certain divisions within a travel league. This emphasis is misguided because it misses a fundamental point. The majority of time that a player spends is at practice. Practice is the only forum where improvement occurs and where the coach has the most influence. Therefore, practice is more important than games in player development.

There are no major differences between the travel leagues in Virginia other than a prestige factor. The competition between the different leagues is not significantly different. No travel league is perfect or significantly better than other leagues.

Every travel league has flaws that counter player development. The organizational structure of travel leagues promotes too many conflicts of interests. Often times, politics is prioritized over merit in the decision making process within leagues.

For example, applying for membership into a travel league is a political process that has nothing to do with merit. The member clubs in a league must vote on the membership of a new club. Typically what happens is that neighboring clubs campaign against the club applying for membership. Neighboring clubs campaign on the premise that the area cannot support another club. It's a clear conflict of interest. Of course neighboring clubs don't want a new club nearby despite the fact that it would improve league strength.

For a player to reach their goals, it comes down to the quality of the coaching at practices. Travel leagues have very little to do with player development. No one league stands out above other leagues. Leagues do not develop players. Coaches develop players.



Curriculum Overview

Proven Curriculum Model

Our 1996-1997 boys age group has produced a significant number of top level players. This fact serves as the basis for our curriculum. Our curriculum captures the learning objectives and the lessons learned with this age group over many years. It's a proven model that will be implemented with all age groups in our travel program.

The majority of current and former 1996-1997 age group players have spent a considerable amount of time in our club. As a result, they have become much better players and are in a good position to reach their goals. This curriculum lists out everything we have done over the years with this age group. It also lists out what we should have done if we had to do it over again.

It is critical that players are coached well in order to develop. Otherwise they won't improve or have opportunities to reach their goals. Our curriculum provides a consistent learning environment with teaching priorities. Our curriculum is based off the following documents. Click on the link below to visit the original source of these documents.

- [USSF Player Development Guidelines](#)
- [US Youth Soccer Player Development Model](#)
- [USSF Curriculum Model](#)

Assumptions and Disclaimers

The primary audience of this document is the FSCI Phoenix coaching staff. To put this document into context, it is important to be well versed in coaching education and understand the problems in youth development. The Curriculum is achievable as long as the following assumptions hold true.

- The player must be well versed in the fundamentals of technique.
 - A player must have a solid foundation in order to understand more complex topics especially at the older ages.
 - If a player is not well versed in the fundamentals, it will take time for the player to improve on their fundamentals before some learning objectives become achievable.
- The player must be self-motivated to be a better player.
 - There is no coach in the universe that can help improve a player if that player lacks passion or motivation to play. A coach can influence passion and motivation to a certain degree but it's the player that makes the choice on how bad they want it.

- The player must be willing to put in the time to become a better player. Players have the ability in our program to get extra practices.
 - Our program is purposely structured where the designated White team in the age group is less demanding in terms of practices and games. The result is that the white team may operate below the practice parameter thresholds. Players are encouraged to get extra practice.
 - The orange team in an age group has the more demanding schedule. This curriculum is more applicable to the Orange teams especially at the older age groups. The practice parameters listed are for the Orange teams.

Teaching Methodology

The majority of practices are planned using methodology taught in the US Soccer coaching schools. There are times where it's appropriate to deviate from this methodology. Some general considerations when running a training session are as follows

- Coaches are not to perform fitness training without the ball until at least the U13 age group. If you need to improve the players fitness, increase the intensity of the activity. Don't waste the players time doing fitness.
- Encourage creativity even if goals are conceded and games are lost between U9 to U11. Encourage creativity with constraints to control turnovers for U12 and beyond.
- Keep the ball on the ground. Do not allow players to send flighted balls for the U12 and younger age groups.
- Do not spend a significant amount of time on set pieces. It's a complete waste of time that comes at the expense of teaching the players the right way to play the game.



U9 and U10 Age Group

High Level Learning Objectives

1. Creative players that can solve problems in 1's or groups of 2
2. Application of basic attacking principles
3. Developing intrinsic motivation and creativity of each player

Style of Play

1. Players that exhibit individual flair/creativity to solve problems.
 - Coaches should not place any restrictions on players in any part of the field even if it results in turnovers.
2. Team shape: 3-3.
 - When attacking, one of the defenders joins the attack.
 - Keep the roles extremely simple. If you can't explain a player's role in a few words or less, it's already too complicated.

Top Priorities

The following items are executed under **light** pressure within the context of small sided games. Solving the problems creatively within groups of 1 or 2 is an essential priority.

1. Execute at least three 1v1 moves proficiently at game speed using both feet. Promote environment where players develop a creative and fearless attitude to take players one versus one.
2. Develop proper first touch with receiving balls on the ground (inside foot, outside foot, open on back foot) using both feet. Ensure players are peeking away prior to the touch.
3. Develop the skill of shooting and finishing from all angles using both feet. Relevant topics include but are not limited to shooting off dribble, shooting off first touch, chipping ball to finish, 1v1 breakaways against goalkeeper, etc. Advanced topics include combining 1v1 attacking with finishing, 1v1 turning with finishing, etc.
4. Develop proper passing technique (outside foot, inside foot, laces, basic chip) using both feet with the proper accuracy and weight.

Secondary Priorities

The following items are executed under **light** pressure within the context of small sided games. Solving the problems creatively within groups of 1 or 2 is also an essential priority.

1. Develop a basic understanding of the decision making required in 1v1, 2v1, 1v2 situations. Relevant topics include when to pass and when to dribble, when to change direction (and associated change of direction dribbling moves) etc.
2. Develop a basic understanding of receiving with turning and receiving with shielding. This topic also includes developing the skill of peeking over the shoulder to identify the pressure.
3. Develop proper first touch with receiving balls in the air (chest, thigh, laces, inside, outside foot).
4. Executes proper skill in 1v1 defending situations. Relevant topics include player defending the back of the attacker, player defending the front of the attacker, angle of approach, immediate chase, closing down on the touch, containment, poke tackle, block tackle, etc. The amount of time spent on this topic should be equal to the amount of time necessary to achieve light pressure for the relevant attacking topic.

Lowest Priorities or Avoidance

1. Avoid spending any time on crossing driven, curved, or air balls. The leg strength of the players at this age does not make this effective.
2. Avoid spending any time on set pieces. Spending time on this item means that higher priority items are being neglected.
3. Avoid spending any time on group defending. This topic becomes abstract very quickly.
4. Minimize time spent on heading. Wait until they are older to do it more frequently.
5. Avoid spending any time coaching team shape. If you can't explain a player's role in a few words or less, it's already too complicated. The ability to think abstractly for players this age is limited.

The Environment

1. Create the environment where mistakes are encouraged for the purposes of learning, improvement, and creativity. This includes developing a culture amongst the players to exhibit good sportsmanship and mutual encouragement.
2. Place restrictions such that ball must always be played on the ground. This restriction should be done to the extreme in order to ingrain good habits.

3. After the players become more proficient in a particular skill, incorporate transition in the activity and incorporate activities where at least 2 techniques must be used to solve a problem. Example 1v1 dribbling with shooting, 1v1 turning with shooting.
4. No fitness training without the ball. If the players need to improve their fitness, make the activities within the practice more intense.
5. Strongly encourage creativity even if it leads to mistakes, goals conceded, and games lost.

Practice Progression Structure (USSF Methodology)

Stage 1 Warmup & Technical Activity	Stage 2 Small Sided Activity	Stage 3 Extended Small Sided Activity	Stage 4 The Game
No Pressure or light pressure	1v1 or 2v2 Activity	2v2 or 3v3	No more than 6v6

1. The table above shows the typical numbers for each stage within the practice progression structure. The number of players per stage can vary based on the practice topic. However, there needs to be good justification to increase the numbers per activity since more numbers means less technical emphasis.
2. At least 50% to 66% of practice time must be spent on solving problems in groups of 2 or less. Smaller numbers encourages more technical emphasis at training. This specifically applies to the first stage, second stage, and occasionally third stage activities within the practice progression.
3. The table below shows the appropriate parameters regarding practices, games, and how long the players need to be active during a given year. Anything beyond these parameters invites overuse injuries and burnout.

Practices Per Week	Practice Duration	Active Months in Year	Practice to Game Ratio
2	60-75 Minutes	7 Months	At least 2 to 1



U11 Age Group

Learning Objectives

1. Solving problems in groups of 3's with introduction of abstract concepts
2. Application of group attacking principles and group defending principles.
3. Developing intrinsic motivation and creativity of each player

Style of Play

1. Possession and probing oriented team
 - that keeps the ball on the ground
 - exploits the width in order to attack
2. Players that exhibit individual flair/creativity to solve problems.
 - Within constraints of reducing turnovers in defensive half.
 - No constraints in the attacking half even if it results in turnovers.
3. Team shape: 3-3-1.
 - Defenders play flat back 3.
 - Outside midfielders constantly encouraged to take players 1v1 on the flank and roam freely on the attack.
 - Central midfield serves as the holding midfielder
 - Striker roam freely without restrictions. When defending, one striker is withdrawn into the midfield.
 - When defending between the boxes, players defend zonally. No man marking between the boxes.

Top Priorities

The following items are executed under **realistic** pressure within the context of small sided games. Solving the problems creatively within groups of 3 is an essential priority.

1. Develop 1v1 moves and change of direction moves proficiently using both feet.
2. Develop proper first touch using both feet with receiving balls on the ground (inside foot, outside foot, open on back foot). Ensure the players develop ability to feint prior to receiving.
3. Develop proper first touch using both feet with receiving balls in the air (chest, thigh, laces, inside, outside foot).

4. Develop proper finishing technique using both feet from all angles with balls on the ground and in the air.
5. Develop the skill of receiving with turning and receiving with shielding using both feet. This topic also includes developing the skill to feint prior to receiving ball and peeking over the shoulder to identify the pressure.
6. Develop proper passing technique (ground pass with outside foot, inside foot, laces, basic chip pass) using both feet with the proper accuracy and weight.
7. Develop proper 1v1 defending skill. Relevant topics include defending the back of the attacker, defending the front of the attacker, angle of approach, closing down on the touch, block tackles, poke tackles, obstruction step, containment, etc. The amount of time spent on this topic should be equal to the amount of time necessary to achieve **realistic** pressure for the relevant attacking topic.
8. Develop a basic understanding of the when/how/why of executing combination play (wall pass, double pass, overlap, etc.) to create 2v1 situations.

Secondary Priorities

The following items are executed under **light** pressure within the context of small sided games unless stated otherwise. Solving the problems creatively within groups of 3 is an essential priority.

1. Introduction on Mobility: Read the positioning of the nearest defender prior to moving into space to receive a ball. Keep explanations mostly concrete and introduce a few abstract points.
2. Introduction on More Abstract Attacking Principles: Develop a basic understanding of how/when to go forward, how/when to provide support, how/when to provide width, how/when to be creative in certain thirds of the field. Keep explanations mostly concrete and introduce a few abstract points.
3. Introduction on Attacking Roles: Develop a basic understanding of team attacking shape. Keep the instruction simple to help the player understand their role. The amount of time spent on this topic should never come at the expense of the higher priority items.
4. Introduction on Defensive Principles: Develop a basic understanding of defending in groups of 2 with transition in numbers down, numbers up and equal number situations. Focus is on immediate chase, depth, delay, and compactness. The amount of time spent on this topic should be equal to the amount of time necessary to achieve **realistic** pressure for the relevant attacking topic. Keep explanations mostly concrete and introduce a few abstract points.

5. Introduction on Safety versus Risk: Basic understanding of safety versus risk in the various thirds of the field. Keep explanations mostly concrete and introduce a few abstract points.

Lowest Priorities or Avoidance

1. Avoid spending any time on crossing driven, curved, or air balls. The leg strength of the players at this age does not make this effective.
2. Avoid spending any significant portion of practice time on set pieces. If you do so, you are neglecting higher priority items. If you need time to work on set pieces, integrate them with the stage 4 activity.
3. Minimize time spent on heading. Wait until they are older to do it more frequently.

The Practice Environment

1. Create the environment where mistakes are encouraged for the purposes of learning, improvement, and creativity. This includes developing a culture amongst the players to exhibit good sportsmanship and mutual encouragement.
2. Place restrictions such that ball must always be played on the ground. This restriction should be done to the extreme in order to ingrain good habits.
3. After player’s become more proficient in a particular skill, incorporate transition in the activity and incorporate activities where at least 2 techniques must be used to solve a problem. Example 1v1 dribbling with shooting, 1v1 turning with shooting.
4. No fitness training without the ball. If the players need to improve their fitness, make the activities within the practice more intense.
5. Minimize downtime at practice. Talks to players must last no more than 30 seconds. If more time is needed to explain something, layer the explanation into small chunks.

Practice Progression Structure (USSF Methodology)

Stage 1 Warmup & Technical Activity	Stage 2 Small Sided Activity	Stage 3 Extended Small Sided Activity	Stage 4 The Game
No Pressure or light pressure	1v1, 2v2, 3v3 Activity	2v2, 3v3, 4v4, 5v5	Ideally 6v6 but no more than 8v8

1. The table above shows the typical numbers for each stage within the progression structure. The number of players per stage can vary based on the

practice topic. However, there needs to be good justification to increase the numbers per activity since more numbers means less technical emphasis.

2. At least 50% to 66% of practice time must be spent on solving problems in groups of 3 or less. Smaller numbers encourages more technical emphasis at training. This specifically applies to the first stage, second stage, and occasionally third stage activities within the practice progression.

3. Start using guided discovery as some of the players are starting to think abstractly.

4. The table below shows the appropriate parameters regarding practices, games, and how long the players need to be active during a given year. Anything beyond these parameters invites overuse injuries and burnout.

Practices Per Week	Practice Duration	Active Months in Year	Practice to Game Ratio
2 to 3	75-90 Minutes	8 Months	3 to 1



U12 Age Group

Learning Objectives

1. Solving problems in blocks with a heavier emphasis on abstract concepts
2. Application of group attacking principles and group defending principles.
3. Developing intrinsic motivation and creativity of each player

Style of Play

1. Possession and probing oriented team
 - keeps the ball on the ground
 - works well in tight spaces
 - exploits the width in order to attack
2. Players that exhibit individual flair/creativity.
 - Within the constraints of reducing turnovers.
3. Team shape: 2-3-2.
 - Defenders play flat back 2.
 - Outside midfielders constantly encouraged to take players 1v1 on the flank and roam freely on the attack.
 - Central midfield serves as the holding midfielder
 - Strikers roam freely without restrictions. When defending, one striker is withdrawn into the midfield.
 - When defending between the boxes, players defend zonally. No man marking between the boxes.

Assumptions

Players are well versed in the fundamentals. If a player is not well versed in the fundamentals, then it will take time to improve the player technically before the priorities within this section are achievable.

Top Priorities

The following items are executed under **realistic** pressure within the context of small sided games that incorporate transition. Solving the problems creatively within blocks is an essential priority.

1. Apply items 1 thru 8 under the U11 Age Group's Top Priorities section under more pressure and faster technical speed.
2. Develop proficiency with crossing and flank play. Crossing a driven ball and curved ball into the box using both feet. Players must have ability to attack 1v1

on the flank. This includes all the associated technical subtopics that build towards this topic.

3. Develop proficiency with finishing off headers and volleys using both feet from all angles. This includes all the associated technical subtopics that build towards this topic.

4. Develop ability of players to maintain possession and work the ball out of tight spaces. This includes all the associated attacking principle subtopics on mobility, support, penetration, and creativity. Realize that the required technical aspect of this topic is far more important than the decision making aspect of this topic.

5. Develop more abstract understanding of how/when to go forward, how/when to provide support, how/when to provide width, how/when to be creative in certain thirds of the field.

6. Develop more of an abstract understanding of team attacking shape and a basic understanding of interchanging roles between the different blocks/lines. Realize that the required technical aspect of this topic is far more important than the decision making aspect of this topic.

7. Develop a more abstract understanding on central players providing distribution in the middle third of the field. This includes subtopics that involve players demonstrating how to check, when to check, and fake movements. This also must be associated with the serving player knowing when to pass, targeting certain foot on the pass, reading visual cues on making the pass, etc.

8. Develop proficiency in zonal defending in groups of 3 in numbers down, numbers up and equal number situations. This includes all the associated subtopics on defensive principles that build towards this topic. Leadership within zonal structures must be stressed.

Secondary Priorities

The following items are executed under **light** pressure within the context of small sided games.

1. Develop a general understanding of rhythm and the decision making associated with playing fast versus playing slow.

2. Develop a general understanding of third man movements using patterns in the middle or final third. Patterns should be simple and focused heavily on the technical aspects.

3. Develop proficiency in defensive headers and clearing balls within the box.

4. Develop a general understanding of quick restarts versus delayed restarts.

Minimal Emphasis or Avoidance

1. Avoid teaching players in blocks of any more than 4 players. If we are teaching players in bigger blocks, then we are neglecting the technical aspect of the game.
2. Spend a minimal amount of time on set pieces. Don't spend an entire practice doing nothing but set pieces. Integrate them with the stage 4 activity.

The Practice Environment

1. Ensure that competition and transition is incorporated in every activity. As the players become more proficient technically, ensure the activities are more intense and that the speed of play increases..
2. Continue to encourage mistakes (with the intent of making less mistakes in the future) for the purposes of learning, improvement, and creativity.
3. Since this is the age group where we are dealing with balls in the air (receiving, striking, and clearing), players will tend to solve problems by playing the ball in the air. If this is the case, the coach must immediately correct this problem in order to ingrain good habits.
4. No fitness training without the ball. If the players need to improve their fitness, make the activities within the practice more intense.

Practice Progression Structure (USSF Methodology)

Stage 1 Warmup & Technical Activity	Stage 2 Small Sided Activity	Stage 3 Extended Small Sided Activity	Stage 4 The Game
No Pressure or light pressure	1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 Activity	4v4, 5v5, 6v6	6v6, 7v7, or 8v8 Activity

1. The table above shows the typical numbers for each stage within the progression structure. The number of players per stage can vary based on the practice topic. However, there needs to be good justification to increase the numbers per activity especially in the first and second stages since more numbers means less technical emphasis.
2. Start using guided discovery as some of the players are starting to think abstractly.
3. Strongly encourage creativity. Unlike the U11 and earlier age groups, the coach must place constraints for the purpose of reducing turnovers and keeping better possession.

4. The table below shows the appropriate parameters regarding practices, games, and how long the players need to be active during a given year. Anything beyond these parameters invites overuse injuries and burnout.

Practices Per Week	Practice Duration	Active Months in Year	Practice to Game Ratio
2 to 3	75-90 Minutes	8 Months	3 to 1



U13 and U14 Age Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Solving problems in blocks with heavy emphasis on abstract concepts
2. Application of group attacking principles and group defending principles.
3. Technique performed under more speed and pressure.

Style of Play

1. Possession and probing oriented team
 - works well in tight spaces
 - exploits the width in order to attack
2. Players that exhibit individual flair/creativity
3. Team shape: 4-4-2
 - Defenders play zonally in a flat back 4 system
 - Outside midfielders constantly encouraged to take players 1v1 on the flank, pinch centrally if necessary, and roam freely on the attack.
 - Each central midfielder alternates between assuming the holding role or attacking role. If this is too difficult, temporarily make the roles more static.
 - Strikers roam freely as “in and out strikers”. When defending, one striker can be withdrawn into the midfield.
 - When defending between the boxes, players defend zonally. No man marking between the boxes unless absolutely necessary.

Assumptions

Players are well versed in the fundamentals. If a player is not well versed in the fundamentals, then it will become difficult (but not impossible) to achieve the technical components that are required to make these learning objectives achievable.

Top Priorities

The following items are executed under **realistic** pressure within the context of **functional** small-sided games that incorporate transition. Solving the problems creatively within functional blocks is an essential priority.

1. Apply items 1 thru 8 under the U11 Age Group’s Top Priorities section at much faster technical speed and under more pressure.

2. Crossing and Finishing in the attacking third. Crossing a driven ball and curved ball into the box using both feet. Players must gain proficiency in finishing off headers and volleys using both feet from all angles. This topic includes all the associated subtopics that build towards this topic.
3. Functional Training with Strikers: Training the twin strikers in the middle third and final third of the field in their roles defensively and on the attack. Strikers must be trained such that they are both “In and Out” strikers. On defense, develop an understanding on the line of confrontation. These topics include all the associated subtopics that build towards this topic. Realize that the required technical aspect of this topic is far more important than the decision making aspect of this topic.
4. Functional Training with the Midfield: Training the midfield players in their roles defensively and on the attack. Develop an understanding that work rate is essential to players in the midfield role. This topic includes all the associated subtopics that build towards this topic. Realize that the required technical aspect of this topic is far more important than the decision making aspect of this topic.
5. Functional Training with the Backs: Training the backs within a flat back 4 system in their roles defensively and on the attack. Develop an understanding of how to handle various attacking pressures and when the line must be lowered. On the attack, focus on working the ball out of the back under realistic pressure instead of simply clearing it each time the ball is won. Also focus on ensuring one player joins the midfielders and strikers on the attack.
6. Dominating the middle third of the field. Relevant topics include build up play in the middle third, getting into the final third, etc.

Secondary Priorities

The following items are executed under **light** pressure within the context of functional small sided games.

1. Develop a general understanding of rhythm and the decision making associated with playing fast versus playing slow.
2. Develop a general understanding of third man movements using patterns in the middle or final third. Patterns should be simple and focused heavily on the technical aspects.
3. Introduction to Functional Training between the Lines: Relevant topics include working the ball out of pressure from the defensive half to the attacking half and working the ball out of pressure from the middle third into the attacking third of the field. This topic includes all the associated subtopics on attacking principles and skill that build towards this topic. This also includes overloading

the pressure on the back 4 or midfield 4 as the ball is worked out of the defensive half.

4. Develop a general understanding of defensive headers and clearing balls within the box.

Minimal Emphasis or Avoidance

1. Avoid teaching players in blocks of any more than 4 players. If we are teaching players in bigger blocks, then we are neglecting the technical aspect of the game.

2. Spend a minimal amount of time on set pieces. Don't spend an entire practice doing nothing but set pieces. Integrate them with the stage 4 activity.

The Practice Environment

1. Ensure that competition and transition is incorporated in every activity. As the players become more proficient technically, ensure the activities are more intense and that the speed of play increases.

2. Continue to encourage mistakes (with the intent of making fewer mistakes in the future) for the purposes of learning, improvement, and creativity.

3. Since this is the age group where we are dealing with balls in the air (receiving, striking, and clearing), players will tend to solve problems by playing the ball in the air. If this is the case, the coach must immediately correct this problem in order to ingrain good habits. Do not allow the backs to hit long balls consistently as a means to solve problems.

4. Minimal amount of fitness training without the ball. If the players need to improve their fitness, make the activities within the practice more intense.

5. Strongly encourage creativity. Unlike the U11 and earlier age groups, the coach must place constraints for the purpose of reducing turnovers and keeping better possession.

Practice Progression Structure (USSF Methodology)

Stage 1 Warmup & Technical Activity	Stage 2 Small Sided Activity	Stage 3 Extended Small Sided Activity	Stage 4 The Game
No Pressure or light pressure	4v4, 5v5, 6v6 Activity Based on Functional Role	6v6, 7v7 or 8v8 Activity Based on Functional Role	Preferably 9v9 but 11v11 is ok Based on Functional Role

1. The table above shows the typical numbers needed for each stage within the progression structure. The number of players per stage can vary based on the practice topic. If the players are struggling technically, then each stage must have less numbers in order to promote more of a technical emphasis. Each player needs a solid technical foundation before progressing to more abstract decision making topics.

2. Ensure that each activity, especially stage 2 and beyond, incorporates competition. Shadow training can now be implemented if necessary.

3. The table below shows the appropriate parameters regarding practices, games, and how long the players need to be active during a given year. Anything beyond these parameters invites overuse injuries and burnout.

Practices Per Week	Practice Duration	Active Months in Year	Practice to Game Ratio
3	90 Minutes	8-9 Months	3.5 to 1



U15 and U16 Age Groups

THIS SECTION IS INCOMPLETE.
AN UPDATE WILL BE POSTED BY JUNE 2015

Learning Objectives

1. Solving problems in multiple blocks with heavy emphasis on abstract concepts
2. Application of group attacking principles and group defending principles.
3. Technique performed under more pressure and speed

Style of Play

1. Possession and probing oriented team
 - works well in tight spaces
 - exploits the width in order to attack
2. Players that exhibit individual flair/creativity
3. Team shape: 4-4-2
 - Defenders play zonally in a flat back 4 system
 - Outside midfielders constantly encouraged to take players 1v1 on the flank, pinch centrally if necessary, and roam freely on the attack.
 - Each central midfielder alternates between assuming the holding role and attacking role.
 - Strikers roam freely as “in and out strikers”. When defending, one striker can be withdrawn into the midfield.
 - When defending between the boxes, players defend zonally. No man marking between the boxes unless absolutely necessary.

Assumptions

Players are well versed in the fundamentals and have a strong desire to compete. If a player is not well versed in the fundamentals, then it will become exponentially difficult to make up the technical components that are required to make these learning objectives achievable.

Top Priorities

The following items are executed under **realistic** pressure within the context of **functional** small-sided games that incorporate transition. Solving the problems creatively within multiple functional blocks is an essential priority.

1. Apply items 1 thru 8 under the U11 Age Group’s Top Priorities section at much faster technical speed and under more pressure.

2. Apply Items 2 thru 6 under the U13 and U14 Age Group Top Priorities section at much faster speed and under more pressure.
3. Develop an advanced understanding of controlling the rhythm of the game. Specifically understand when to play fast versus playing slow.
4. Functional Training between the Lines: Working the ball out of pressure from the defensive half to the attacking half. This topic includes all the associated subtopics on attacking principles and skill that build towards this topic. This also includes overloading the pressure on the back 4 as the ball is worked out of the defensive third.

Minimal Emphasis or Avoidance

1. Spend a minimal amount of time on set pieces. Don't spend an entire practice doing nothing but set pieces. Integrate them with the stage 4 activity.

The Practice Environment

1. Continue to encourage mistakes (with the intent of making fewer mistakes in the future) for the purposes of learning, improvement, and creativity.

Practice Progression Structure (USSF Methodology)

Stage 1 Warmup & Technical Activity	Stage 2 Small Sided Activity	Stage 3 Extended Small Sided Activity	Stage 4 The Game
No Pressure or light pressure	At least 6v6 Activity	8v8 Activity Based on Functional Role	11v11 is ok Based on Functional Role

1. The table above shows the typical numbers needed for each stage within the progression structure. The number of players per stage can vary based on the practice topic. If the players are struggling technically, then each stage must have less numbers in order to promote more of a technical emphasis. Each player needs a solid technical foundation before progressing to more abstract decision making topics.

2. The table below shows the typical parameters regarding practices, games, how long the players need to be active during a given year.

Practices Per Week	Practice Duration	Active Months in Year	Practice to Game Ratio
3-4	90 Minutes	9-10 Months	4 to 1